



Senegal: Background and U.S. Relations

Alexis Arieff

Analyst in African Affairs

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Summary

Senegal, a small, semi-arid nation on West Africa's Atlantic coast, has long been viewed as one of the region's most stable democracies. However, recent political trends have raised concerns among analysts and policymakers. Attention is currently focused on plans by President Abdoulaye Wade (pronounced "wahd"), 85, to run for a third term in elections scheduled for February 26, 2012. Opponents claim that Wade's candidacy is unconstitutional, pointing to a two-term limit in Senegal's 2001 constitution. However, Wade's eligibility to run was upheld in late January by Senegal's Constitutional Council, which ruled that the constitutional provision did not apply to Wade's first term in office (2000-2007), since the 2001 constitution was promulgated during his first term. The dispute has sparked demonstrations and rioting, leading analysts to question Senegal's stability and the potential for a free and fair vote.

In office since 2000, Wade was initially credited with expanding civil liberties, bolstering economic growth, improving government health and education services, and negotiating a landmark peace accord in the long-volatile southern Casamance region. He was returned to office in 2007 in an election that the State Department termed "open, peaceful, and highly competitive," despite objections by opposition parties, which boycotted subsequent legislative elections. Wade's reputation has since been marred by his increasingly unilateral exercise of power, along with reports of rising corruption, nepotism, and restrictions on civil liberties. Violence has also flared in Casamance since 2009, despite the previous peace deal.

The State Department refers to U.S.-Senegalese relations as "excellent," while noting concerns over negative governance trends. In early 2012, State Department officials publicly criticized Wade's decision to run for a third term, with State Department Spokeswoman Victoria Nuland calling on Wade on January 30 to "cede to the next generation." Wade has publicly objected to what he views as outside attempts to interfere in domestic politics.

U.S. bilateral engagement has increased in recent years. Bilateral assistance, estimated at \$98.8 million in FY2011, is focused on public health, food security, democratic governance, economic growth, rural development, and military professionalism. In addition, the United States signed a \$540 million Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact with Senegal in 2009. The United States has viewed Senegal as an anchor of regional stability and a potential partner in combating transnational security threats, such as terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and maritime piracy. Senegal is a significant contributor of troops to international peacekeeping missions, and thousands of Senegalese peacekeepers have received U.S. training through the State Department's Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program.

Congress plays a role in guiding U.S. policy toward Senegal through its authorization, appropriation, and oversight of foreign assistance and executive branch policies. Some Members of Congress have recently expressed concern regarding the decision to award Senegal an MCC compact in light of concerns over corruption and political trends. In the conference report accompanying P.L. 112-74, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2012, appropriators directed the allocation of at least \$50 million in development aid to Senegal, while also expressing concern over Senegal's failure, to date, to bring to justice former Chadian president Hissène Habré, who lives in Senegal and has been accused of crimes against humanity.

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Background

Senegal has remained relatively stable but poor since gaining independence from France in 1960. It is an electoral democracy and among the few countries in Africa never to have experienced a coup d'état. Its relatively well trained and disciplined military numbers some 17,000 personnel. Senegal is seen as a diplomatic leader in Africa, particularly among Francophone states. The population is 94% Muslim, with most Senegalese adhering to one of four prominent Sufi orders. Still, ethnic and religious divisions play less of a role in politics in Senegal than in much of West Africa.

Senegal's first post-independence leader, Léopold Senghor, was a poet and politician celebrated as one of post-colonial Africa's most important intellectuals. Although a self-described socialist and pan-Africanist, Senghor cultivated close ties with the West—in particular, France—and resisted the Eastern Bloc influence then prevalent elsewhere in the region. Senghor presided over a de-facto one-party state through his ruling Socialist Party (PS) until 1981, when he stepped down and was succeeded by the PS's Abdou Diouf. Diouf continued Senghor's pro-Western policies and oversaw Senegal's gradual political liberalization. Still, elections in the late 1980s and 1990s were marred by alleged fraud, repression of anti-government activism, and in some cases violence.¹

In March 2000, longtime opposition leader Abdoulaye Wade (pronounced “wahd”) won presidential elections widely seen as free and fair. Wade’s victory and the peaceful transfer of power to his Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) were hailed as a landmark for democracy in Senegal and the region, which had seen few democratic transitions between civilian leaders. Recently, however, Senegalese and international observers have raised concerns over apparent democratic “backsliding.” Although government investments in infrastructure, reforms, and donor assistance have provided the conditions for economic growth in recent years, many Senegalese reportedly feel excluded from the resulting wealth, which they perceive as having been concentrated in the capital, Dakar, and among the political and economic elite.

U.S. Interests

U.S. policy toward Senegal focuses on encouraging democratic governance, economic growth and development, and military professionalism. The United States views Senegal as an anchor of regional stability and a partner in combating transnational security threats, such as terrorism,

Figure 1. Map of Senegal



Source: CRS

¹ The current president, Abdoulaye Wade, was imprisoned in the mid-1990s on charges widely seen as politically motivated.

narcotics trafficking, and maritime piracy. U.S. engagement has increased in recent years, in part due to Senegal's identity as a moderate, majority-Muslim country in a region affected by violent extremism. President Wade has also pursued closer bilateral ties as part of a foreign policy that appears broadly aimed at weaning Senegal from its traditional reliance on France. U.S. officials have nevertheless criticized recent democracy and governance trends and expressed concern over their potential to spark future instability.

Congress has played a role in U.S. policy toward Senegal through the annual appropriation of foreign assistance and via the oversight of executive branch policies and strategies. Recent congressional interest has arisen over a number of issues, including:

- socioeconomic development, health outcomes, and food security;
- democracy and governance trends;
- the management of bilateral assistance, in particular Senegal's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact, amid concerns over corruption; and
- security issues, such as Senegal's capacity to counter transnational threats and Senegalese troop contributions to international peacekeeping.

Senegal at a Glance

Population: 12.6 million (2011 est.)

Area: slightly smaller than South Dakota

Gross Domestic Product: \$14.7 billion (2011)

Population Living Below National Poverty Line:
50.8% (2005)

Median Age: 18 years

Key Economic Sectors: fishing, tourism, groundnuts (peanuts), phosphates, cotton

Religion: Muslim 94%, Christian 5% (mostly Roman Catholic), indigenous beliefs 1%

Languages: French (official), Wolof, other local languages

Life Expectancy at Birth: 59.8 years

Literacy Rate: 50% (2009)

Adult HIV/AIDS Prevalence Rate: 0.9% (2009 est.)

Major Trading Partners: France, Mali, United Kingdom, India, China

Sources: CIA World Factbook; World Bank Development Indicators database

Politics

President Wade and his Democratic Senegalese Party (PDS), supported by a broad coalition known as *Sopi* ("Change" in Wolof), benefited from widespread support following Wade's electoral victory in 2000. Wade was easily reelected in 2007. In recent years, however, opposition leaders, rights advocates, and diplomats have expressed concern over Senegal's political trajectory. In 2009, the U.S.-based organization Freedom House downgraded Senegal's ranking on political and civil liberties from "Free" to "Partly Free," attributing the change to "the growing authoritarian power of the president and ruling party."²

Wade has sought to centralize power in a system that already endows the presidency with significant authorities. The president appoints the prime minister and can dismiss him at will, and also appoints the justices of the country's highest appeals court and Constitutional Council. In 2001, a new constitution that reduced presidential terms from seven to five years and introduced a two-term limit was approved by referendum. However, a constitutional amendment adopted by

² Freedom House, *Freedom in the World* in 2009, August 16, 2010.

the legislature in 2008 reextended the presidential term to seven years, and Wade is running for a third term in office (see below).³ In 2006, an upper legislative chamber, the Senate, was created in which the president appoints 65 out of 100 members; the remainder are indirectly elected. This development, followed by the ruling party's electoral sweep of the National Assembly (lower chamber) in 2007 amid an opposition boycott, led local civil society groups to warn of "the de-facto return of a single-party system."⁴ Potential political rivals to Wade within the PDS have been stripped of their positions or, in at least one high-profile case, criminally charged.⁵ Critics allege that the president has also sought to undermine the independence of regulatory and oversight bodies, such as the electoral commission, the media regulator, and the judiciary.⁶ Recently, some analysts have expressed alarm over perceptions that Wade has favored members of the *Mouride* Sufi brotherhood, to which he belongs, which could drive religious-based political competition and potentially undermine Senegal's tradition of secularism.⁷

Popular discontent with the government, particularly among youth in the impoverished suburbs of Dakar, has escalated over economic hardships and high unemployment; frequent power cuts; perceptions of corruption and nepotism; and Wade's efforts to extend his rule (see "Third Term Debate," below). Opposition has been compounded by perceptions that Wade is promoting his unpopular son, Karim, as a future president.⁸ Karim Wade currently serves as a cabinet minister with an extensive portfolio related to infrastructure, foreign affairs, and energy. Urban protests have frequently erupted in recent years, and in some cases they have led to rioting and violence. Wade has dismissed recent protests over his third term electoral bid as insignificant.

In 2008, opposition parties and civil society groups initiated a series of "national conferences" to discuss perceived economic, political, and social problems. The discussions concluded that greater parliamentary scrutiny of the executive and a more independent judiciary were needed to strengthen democratic participation and accountability. They also concluded that elected officials and appointed heads of state agencies should be required to declare their assets. Wade's administration declined to participate in the consultations.⁹

The Third Term Debate

Tensions between the president and opposition groups have spiraled since early 2011 over Wade's controversial decision to seek a third term in office in elections scheduled for February 26, 2012.

³ The legislative proposal was submitted by the then-Interior Minister; the legislature is controlled by the ruling PDS.

⁴ *Wal Fadjri*, "Face à la Crise Sociale, Politique, Economique - La Société Civile Vers la Création d'un Système d'Alerte et d'Action Unitaire," October 10, 2007.

⁵ Idrissa Seck, now an opposition candidate for the presidency, was dismissed as prime minister in 2004, then arrested and charged with embezzlement and threatening national security. Seck was never tried; he was imprisoned for over six months before all charges were dropped.

⁶ Penda Mbow, "Senegal: The Return of Personalism," *Journal of Democracy*, January 2008; comments by Chris Fomunyoh of the National Democratic Institute at the Brookings Institution, February 16, 2012.

⁷ Remarks by Mamadou Diouf of Columbia University at the Brookings Institution, February 16, 2012.

⁸ In July 2011, Karim Wade published an open letter disavowing any possible "monarchic succession." President Wade has also sought to dispel succession rumors, stating, "I have no intention of putting my son in my place before I go.... But he is a citizen of Senegal and he is free to stand in elections when he wants to." Agence France Presse (AFP), "Senegal's Wade Denies Grooming Son for Presidency," July 15, 2010. He has also defended Karim Wade's cabinet appointments as merit-based. AFP, "Senegal's President Denies Dynastic Ambitions," October 23, 2010.

⁹ EIU, "Senegal Politics: Conclusions of the *Assises Nationales* Are Published," July 16, 2009.

The dispute over Wade's candidacy has sparked recent demonstrations and rioting, leading some analysts to question Senegal's stability and the potential for a free and fair vote. Opponents claim that Wade's candidacy is unconstitutional, pointing to the two-term limit in the constitution, and to Wade's earlier promises that he would not run again after 2007.¹⁰ However, Wade reversed his earlier pledges and announced a run for a third term in 2009. His right to do so was upheld on January 30, 2012, by Senegal's Constitutional Council, which ruled that the 2001 constitution was enacted after Wade's election in 2000 and therefore came into effect only after Wade's first term ended in 2007. The Council also barred the presidential candidacy of one of Wade's most high-profile opponents, global pop star Youssou N'Dour, because it said it could not verify all of the petition signatures N'Dour had submitted in support of his candidacy. The Council's decision was criticized as opaque by European Union observers, and opposition figures accused the Council of carrying out a "constitutional coup," noting that its members were appointed by Wade. Still, 13 opposition candidacies were approved, including at least three that had been challenged by the ruling PDS on tax grounds.¹¹

On June 23, 2011, protests and riots broke out across Dakar in response to proposed constitutional amendments to shorten the presidential election to one round (with a plurality, instead of a majority, required to win) and to make the currently vacant post of Vice President an elected position, which candidates would seek to fill by joining a presidential ticket. This was widely perceived as an effort to promote Wade's son Karim. The amendments were withdrawn, and the protests gave rise to a coalition of civil society and opposition parties focused on deterring Wade's candidacy, known as the June 23rd Movement, or M23. They also brought attention to a rapper-led social movement calling itself "Y'En A Marre," or "We've Had Enough." The protests were followed days later by riots over electricity cuts in Dakar, which were curbed only after the military was called up to perform crowd control.

Opposition and civil society members of the M23 have called for mass "resistance" against Wade's candidacy. At the time of writing, youths in Dakar were engaging in escalating violent skirmishes with security forces. The M23 is united by little other than opposition to Wade, and it is unclear whether leaders fully exercise control over street protests or whether opposition candidates will be able to mobilize effective electoral campaigns. That said, opposition disunity does not necessarily presage a Wade victory. The presidential electoral system requires an absolute majority to win; if no candidate obtains a majority on February 26, a second round between the two top candidates will be held. Prominent opposition candidates include Ousmane Tanor Dieng of the former ruling Socialist Party (PS); Moustapha Niasse of the Alliance of Forces of Progress (AFP), who served as foreign minister under the PS and briefly as Wade's prime minister early in his first term; and Idrissa Seck and Macky Sall, both former prime ministers and formerly close Wade associates.

Recent Elections

While Senegal has a reputation for running elections well, the conduct of national elections in 2007 caused a standoff between the ruling party and the opposition that continues to affect national politics. Wade won reelection in February 2007 with 56% of the vote in a field of 15 candidates; the election was ascertained to be largely free and fair by international monitors,

¹⁰ AFP, "Senegal's Wade Not Eligible to Run in 2012: Reports," August 23, 2010.

¹¹ Reuters, "EU Mission Urges Clarity in Senegal Poll Ruling," January 29, 2012.

despite minor irregularities.¹² However, the main opposition coalition contested the results and called for the redrawing of district boundaries and the replacement of the head of the national elections commission, whom opposition leaders perceived as biased. After accusing Wade of refusing to discuss their concerns, the opposition boycotted legislative elections held in June 2007. Consequently, Wade's *Sopi* coalition—which had won a majority in 2001 parliamentary polls and played a crucial role in supporting Wade's policy agenda in his first term—swept the National Assembly, capturing 131 out of 150 seats. Turnout was reportedly low.¹³

Signs of an electoral backlash against Wade and his party emerged in 2009, when an opposition coalition known as Benno Siggil Senegal (“United to Boost Senegal”) won a majority of seats and nearly all urban areas in local and municipal elections. The opposition also defeated Wade's son, Karim, in the race for mayor of Dakar. The peaceful acceptance of opposition gains in 2009 convinced some observers that the electoral system retained a potential for fairness.

Governance and Human Rights

President Wade's administration has prioritized improvements in urban infrastructure, particularly in Dakar, as it seeks to position Dakar as a major transportation and service hub in the region. However, it is unclear whether this strategy can provide sufficient economic dividends to stave off rising expectations from a burgeoning, and disproportionately youthful, urban populace.¹⁴ The government has also focused on improving health services and rural education. Senegal has been particularly praised for its HIV/AIDS programs, which were initiated in the mid-1980s—long before most—and have contributed to a relatively low rate of infection (less than 1% of the adult population).¹⁵ Senegal's anti-malaria program has also received plaudits. Still, many rural areas and some urban neighborhoods remain underserved by roads, electricity, sanitation, and drinking water. Gaps in service provision in Casamance have provided a basis for ongoing conflict there, though the government has attempted to improve services in the region, with donor assistance.¹⁶

Observers contend that official corruption is rising, and some analysts have critiqued the concentration of wealth in the capital and among a relatively small elite. Senegal's rank on Transparency International's Corruptions Perceptions Index has dropped in recent years, falling from 71 in 2007 to 112 in 2011, out of 182 countries assessed. Senegal nevertheless continues to rank better on the Index than many of its neighbors. Several recent high-profile corruption scandals have negatively affected the government's reputation.¹⁷ Controversy was also sparked by

¹² State Department, “2009 Human Rights Report: Senegal,” March 2010. The State Department elsewhere referred to the 2000 and 2007 elections as “open, peaceful, and highly competitive.” State Department, “Background Note: Senegal,” updated January 13, 2012. Wade's closest rival was Idrissa Seck, who captured 15%. Ousmane Tanor Dieng, of the Socialist Party, garnered 13.6%. Turnout was reported at 73% of registered voters.

¹³ Official figures claimed 38% turnout. Opposition leaders contended actual turnout was far lower.

¹⁴ Leonardo A. Villalón, “Senegal: Assessing Risks to Stability,” Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2011.

¹⁵ The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) attributes Senegal's success at maintaining low HIV prevalence to “the confluence of a number of factors, including strong political leadership, early involvement and leadership among religious leaders, conservative cultural norms regarding sexual practices, and a comprehensive strategic approach implemented early in the epidemic.” *Health Profile: Senegal, HIV/AIDS*, 2004.

¹⁶ See, e.g., USAID, *Evaluation of the USAID Peace-Building Program in Casamance and Sub-Region*, 2006.

¹⁷ For example, in early 2010, Senegalese officials reportedly attempted to extort \$200 million from a Luxembourg-based telecommunications company, Millicom. In September 2009, Wade gave nearly \$200,000 in cash to the outgoing International Monetary Fund (IMF) resident representative during a meeting over dinner in September 2009. Wade later admitted to giving the money as a “farewell gift,” but denied he was attempting to influence IMF assessments.

Wade's decision, in 2009, to construct a \$27 million monument to the "African Renaissance," a 50-yard-high bronze statue that overlooks Dakar.¹⁸

Some analysts allege that Wade's administration has created opportunities for corruption through the privatization of parastatals, such as the national telecommunications agency, and by creating new "special agencies" in charge of aspects of state procurement, such as the Agency for Investments and the National Agency for the Organization of the Islamic Conference.¹⁹ The latter, then headed by Wade's son, Karim, oversaw government procurement for large public infrastructure projects initiated ahead of Senegal's hosting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference summit in 2008, and was repeatedly implicated in corruption allegations.²⁰ The government has recently taken small steps to combat corruption, such as establishing audit and anti-corruption commissions and an independent authority to oversee government procurement.²¹ U.S. embassy officials have also praised Senegal's efforts to increase budget transparency, in line with pressure from donors, including through software that tracks government accounting.²²

The 2010 State Department human rights report identified the following as "major" human rights issues: poor treatment of detainees and prisoners; overcrowded prisons; "questionable investigative detention and long pretrial detention," lack of an independent judiciary; limits on freedoms of speech, press, and assembly; corruption and impunity; rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment of and discrimination against women; female genital mutilation (FGM)²³; child abuse; child marriage; infanticide; trafficking in persons; and child labor. The State Department also documented abuses by rebel forces in Casamance.²⁴ Recent reports by Human Rights Watch have noted police abuses against gay men (and men perceived as gay), and the widespread abuse and economic exploitation of children at Senegalese Quranic schools, where tens of thousands of young boys, often separated from their impoverished rural families, receive religious instruction.²⁵ Amnesty International has accused Senegalese security forces of torturing suspects in custody in connection with criminal cases, civil offenses, and the conflict in Casamance, a practice that the government contends is rare and that it has promised to combat.²⁶

¹⁸ Wade declared himself the "intellectual owner" of the monument and claimed he was therefore entitled to a 35% cut of future related tourism revenues, which he said he would donate to charity. The statue, reportedly constructed with North Korean labor, was inaugurated in April 2010 for Senegal's celebration of its 50th anniversary of independence. The statue sparked local opposition on political, economic, and esthetic grounds.

¹⁹ See, e.g., Tarik Dahou and Vincent Foucher, "Le Sénégal, Entre Changement Politique et Révolution Passive. 'Sopi' or not 'Sopi'?" *Politique Africaine*, December 2004.

²⁰ See, for example, Abdou Latif Coulibaly, *Contes et Mecomptes de l'ANOCI*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009.

²¹ Oxford Analytica, "Senegal: Governance Concerns Rise Over Wade Agenda," July 29 2010.

²² U.S. Embassy Dakar, "Senegal's Budget Process is Transparent [UNCLASSIFIED]," May 4, 2010.

²³ The 1999 Penal Law outlawed domestic violence and female genital mutilation, and the rate of FGM has reportedly decreased; however, implementation has been uneven.

²⁴ State Department, "2010 Human Rights Report: Senegal," April 8, 2011.

²⁵ HRW, *Fear for Life: Violence Against Gay Men and Men Perceived as Gay in Senegal*, November 2010; Human Rights Watch (HRW), "*Off the Backs of the Children*": Forced Begging and Other Abuses against Talibés in Senegal, April 15, 2010. In response to the report and related U.S. pressure over child trafficking, the government announced it would enforce a ban on street begging and brought seven Quranic teachers to trial. However, police sweeps and other enforcement efforts raised new child protection concerns.

²⁶ Amnesty International, *Senegal: Land of Impunity*, September 15, 2010; AFP, "Senegal: La Pratique de la Torture Existe Mais Est 'Minime' (Gouvernement)," September 16, 2010.

Rights groups have also criticized the government for delays in prosecuting former Chadian President Hissène Habré, who lives in Senegal, for crimes committed under his leadership in Chad (1982-1990). In July 2006, the African Union directed Senegal to prosecute Habré after Belgium issued an international arrest warrant charging him with crimes against humanity, war crimes, and torture. Wade initially agreed to a prosecution, and the Senegalese legislature amended the constitution and passed legislation aimed at removing any legal obstacles. However, the prosecution has stalled, initially due to Senegalese claims of insufficient donor funding. Debate over whether to extradite Habré to either Belgium or Chad is ongoing.²⁷

Senegal has long been considered a regional leader in press freedom. Since 2008, however, criminal prosecutions of journalists have increased, along with physical attacks against members of the press and media outlets, allegedly biased enforcement of media regulation by state agencies, occasional efforts to suppress anti-Wade publications, and verbal assaults on the media by Wade and other officials.²⁸ Still, local media continue to express a diverse range of political opinions and frequently provide a platform for opposition views.

The Economy

Senegal is a semi-arid, predominantly agrarian country with few natural resources. Key foreign exchange earners include fishing, peanuts, phosphates, tourism, and remittances from Senegalese workers abroad. Senegal is also highly dependent on foreign aid, which in 2007 represented about 23% of overall government spending.²⁹ Although government investments in infrastructure, reforms, and donor assistance have provided the conditions for relatively strong annual economic growth of 4-5.5% over the past decade, Senegal remains among the world's least developed countries (LDCs). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently estimated growth in 2011 at 4%, and projected a slight increase to 4.4% in 2012 due to infrastructure investments in energy and transportation.³⁰ In 2010, the IMF noted that Senegal's real GDP growth over the previous 15 years had lagged behind Africa's "best-performing, non-oil exporting countries" by at least 2% annually; the Fund attributed the difference to Senegal's relative deficiencies in a number of areas "including infrastructure, non-price competitiveness, and strength of fiscal institutions, as well as factors such as governance, the quality of institutions, and financial market development."³¹

President Wade's administration has undertaken reforms aimed at maintaining macroeconomic stability, improving tax collection, enhancing competitiveness, and weaning parastatal firms off public subsidies. In 2009, the World Bank named Senegal one of the world's "top ten reformers," citing regulatory and trade reforms.³² Still, bureaucratic burdens, corruption, rigid labor laws, chronic electricity shortages, a lack of transparency in public contracting, shortfalls in judicial independence and efficiency, and opaque land titling procedures potentially hinder further

²⁷ See HRW, "The Case Against Hissène Habré, an 'African Pinochet,'" at <http://www.hrw.org/justice/habre/>.

²⁸ Committee to Protect Journalists, *Attacks on the Press in 2009*.

²⁹ State Department, "Background Note." According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Senegal received over a billion dollars in official development assistance in 2009, excluding debt relief.

³⁰ IMF, *Senegal: Second Review Under the Policy Support Instrument*, December 2011.

³¹ IMF, "IMF Executive Board Completes Final Review Under PSI with Senegal and Approves New Three-Year PSI," Press Release No. 10/469, December 3, 2010.

³² World Bank, "Top Ten Reformers from *Doing Business 2009*," at [www.doingbusiness.org].

growth.³³ Critics also object to Wade’s focus on “prestige” projects, such as a new international airport and highways in Dakar.³⁴

Senegal continues to face challenges in alleviating poverty and addressing the burden of disease. Senegal ranked 155 out of 187 countries assessed by the 2011 U.N. Human Development Index. Nineteen percent of the population is undernourished, and 31% of the population lacks reliable access to clean water, according to the World Bank. Senegal suffers from food insecurity, attributable in part to a dry and unpredictable climate, poor water and land management, demographic pressures, and periodic locust infestations. It relies on imports for 70% of its food supply—the highest rate in Sub-Saharan Africa.³⁵ The effects of global climate change are expected to further worsen food insecurity in Senegal, as in much of the region.³⁶ Discontent over socioeconomic conditions has contributed to a high rate of emigration, particularly among young men and often in highly unsafe travel conditions.³⁷

Security Issues

Senegal’s primary internal security concern is unrest in the southern Casamance region, the location of a three-decade, low-level separatist insurgency. Casamance is cut off from much of Senegal by The Gambia and is ethnically and religiously distinct. It was historically populated by the Diola ethnic group, who largely follow Christian and animist beliefs, in contrast to the country’s Muslim majority, who speak Wolof as a lingua franca. A landmark peace agreement was signed in 2004, but violence has resurged since 2009. The main rebel organization, the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC), has been increasingly fragmented in the wake of the death of its longtime leader, Father Augustin Diamacoune Senghor, in 2007. Fighters and ex-combatants reportedly also engage in banditry and organized crime, including trafficking in arms, narcotics, and timber.³⁸ A Senegalese military source alleged in late 2010 that rebel fighters had displayed “new equipment... such as rocket launchers, mortars, and machine guns.”³⁹ While the conflict remains locally contained, it has hurt the regional economy, which is ordinarily a tourism destination, and caused population displacements in rural areas.

Transnational security threats include the potential violent extremism, narcotics trafficking, and organized crime. The State Department reported in 2011 that “Senegal cooperated with U.S. counterterrorism efforts.”⁴⁰ Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), an extremist group with ties to Al Qaeda and roots in Algeria’s 1990s civil conflict, is active in neighboring Mauritania

³³ See, e.g., State Department “2011 Investment Climate Statement,” March 2011.

³⁴ Oxford Analytica, “Bolder Senegal Opposition Still Lacks a Clear Leader,” July 1 2011.

³⁵ U.S. government, “Feed the Future,” Senegal FY2010 Implementation Plan, at http://www.feedthefuture.gov/documents/FTF_2010_Implementation_Plan_Senegal.pdf.

³⁶ U.N. Development Program and Government of Senegal, *Changement Climatique, Sécurité Alimentaire et Développement Humain*, 2010; Oxfam Senegal profile, December 2009.

³⁷ See International Organization on Migration (IOM), *Migration au Sénégal: Profil National*, 2009.

³⁸ U.N. Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Transnational Trafficking and the Rule of Law in West Africa: A Threat Assessment*, July 2009. MFDC factions long financed themselves through proceeds from the sub-regional trade in hashish, but the entry of cocaine and other narcotics into the region has reportedly altered existing trafficking networks and the dynamics of the conflict.

³⁹ AFP, “Violence Surges in Casamance as Peace Process Stays Blocked,” December 29, 2010.

⁴⁰ State Department, “Country Reports on Terrorism 2010,” August 18, 2011.

and Mali, but has not carried out attacks in Senegal. Many analysts believe that there is little indigenous support for Islamist extremism, given Senegal's history of religious tolerance.

The U.N. Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2009 assessed the value of illicit trafficking flows through Senegal at 8.2 times larger than GDP.⁴¹ The trafficking of cocaine from South America to Europe via West Africa has drawn particular international attention, as it is viewed as a significant potential threat to regional stability and the rule of law. Cocaine reportedly enters Senegal either overland or by sea via neighboring Guinea-Bissau and Guinea, or directly by air. Though Senegal's law enforcement agencies are relatively effective compared to many in the region, they are considered too weak to effectively prevent or prosecute organized crime and related financial crimes, such as money laundering and terrorist financing.⁴²

The drug trade is thought to benefit from regional smuggling networks that are also leveraged for duty-free cigarettes, counterfeit prescription drugs, small arms, and persons.⁴³ Senegal is a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking in persons, notably children and women subjected to forced labor, forced begging, and sex trafficking. In 2011, the State Department classified Senegal as "Tier 2" under the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA, P.L. 106-386), an improvement from its "Tier 2 Watchlist" ranking in 2010.⁴⁴

Foreign Relations

Senegal has long benefited from close partnerships with Western donors. Former colonial power France is its largest source of bilateral development aid, followed by the United States.⁴⁵ While France transferred a long-held military base in Dakar to Senegalese control in 2010 and initiated a withdrawal of all but 300 of its troops (from 1,000 previously), military cooperation is set to continue. Still, France has recently obliquely criticized President Wade's third term candidacy.⁴⁶ Wade, meanwhile, has increasingly pursued non-traditional sources of economic support, notably from the Middle East and China, while maintaining strong ties to longtime partners. This strategy appears to be motivated by a desire to emphasize independence to a domestic audience, an effort to maximize aid flows, and a hedge against conditions placed on Western aid flows.

In public appearances with Middle Eastern leaders, President Wade often emphasizes a shared religious identity. Senegal is an active member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), having headed the organization in the 1970s and hosted the annual summit twice (in 1969 and 2008). Ahead of the 2008 OIC summit, Senegal benefitted from substantial infrastructure assistance from Arab Gulf countries. Despite previously warming relations with Iran, Senegal cut diplomatic ties in February 2011, stating that a military investigation showed an Iranian arms shipment seized in Nigeria was destined for Casamance rebels based in The Gambia.⁴⁷ Although

⁴¹ UNODC, *Transnational Trafficking*, op. cit.

⁴² State Department, *Money Laundering and Financial Crimes Country Database*, May 2010.

⁴³ UNODC, *Transnational Trafficking and the Rule of Law in West Africa*, op. cit.

⁴⁴ State Department, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2011*, June 27, 2011. See CRS Report RL34317, *Trafficking in Persons: U.S. Policy and Issues for Congress*, by Alison Siskin and Liana Sun Wyler.

⁴⁵ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) statistics on official development aid. The 2009 U.S. MCC compact may push the United States ahead.

⁴⁶ *Le Monde*, "Paris Souhaite 'Un Passage de Générations' au Sénégal," February 1, 2012.

⁴⁷ AP, "Senegal Cuts Ties with Iran Over Weapons Shipment Believed to Target Senegalese Forces," February 23, (continued...)

Wade had previously cultivated a close relationship with Muammar al Qadhafi, he embraced Libya's Transitional National Council in May 2011, earlier than most of his African counterparts.

Senegal cultivates a position of regional diplomatic leadership and has generally refrained from direct involvement in neighboring conflicts, apart from conflict resolution efforts. As of January 2012, over 1,500 Senegalese troops (nearly one-tenth of Senegal's total armed forces) and 745 police were serving in U.N.-mandated peacekeeping missions, notably in Darfur, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Haiti.⁴⁸ Still, tensions occasionally arise with neighboring Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia over those countries' alleged links to Casamance rebels and over a border dispute with Guinea-Bissau. In 2011, relations with Guinea appeared strained after Guinean President Alpha Condé accused Senegal of hosting an armed plot against him. (Senegal vehemently denied the allegation.) In 1989, tensions over grazing and fishing rights along the border with Mauritania sparked riots and vigilante reprisals in both countries, resulting in large-scale, ethnically based forced expulsions from Mauritania into Senegal. The two countries have pursued a rapprochement in recent years, and the United Nations has facilitated the return of displaced populations. Wade brokered a 2009 political agreement in Mauritania that paved the way for elections following a military coup.

U.S. Relations

The State Department describes U.S.-Senegalese relations as "excellent."⁴⁹ The U.S. Embassy in Dakar is the third largest in Africa, and the United States is among Senegal's top donors. Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush visited Senegal during their tenures, and President Wade met President Bush at the White House in June 2001. U.S. officials have nevertheless criticized recent democracy and governance trends. The State Department's FY2012 aid budget request for Senegal refers to "the gradual erosion of governance and transparency," and states that democracy promotion is currently a focus of U.S. assistance activities.⁵⁰ In May 2010, the U.S. Ambassador to Senegal suggested that Senegal had to reduce corruption in order to retain MCC assistance, provoking a hostile, though short-lived, public response from President Wade.⁵¹

Senior State Department officials have recently criticized Wade's decision to seek a third term in office. On January 30, 2012, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State William Burns stated his concern that Wade's candidacy "could jeopardize the decades-long record that Senegal has built up on the continent for democracy, democratic development and political stability."⁵² The same day, State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland stated that "while we respect the... political and legal process in Senegal, the fact that [Wade has] now been cleared to run, our message to him remains the same: that the statesmanlike thing to do would be to cede to the next generation."⁵³ In

(...continued)

2011.

⁴⁸ United Nations, *U.N. Mission's Summary Detailed by Country*, January 31, 2012.

⁴⁹ State Department, "Senegal: Background Note," op. cit.

⁵⁰ State Department, FY2012 Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations.

⁵¹ Wade criticized the Ambassador's statement and, referring to MCC aid, said the United States should "take it and give it to some country where people don't mind being insulted." Reuters, "U.S. Tells Senegal Aid Hangs on Anti-Graft Effort," May 27, 2010; AFP, "Senegal President Snaps at US Over Corruption Comment," May 29, 2010.

⁵² Reuters, "Senegal Leader's Poll Bid Could Risk Stability-US," January 30, 2012.

⁵³ State Department Daily Briefing, January 30, 2012.

response to these and similar statements from France, Wade declared that he would not accept “orders” from foreigners.⁵⁴ The Senegalese Foreign Ministry summoned U.S. Ambassador Lewis Lukens in early February after a media interview in which Lukens referred to Wade’s candidacy as “regrettable.” On February 14, Ambassador Lukens met with President Wade, after which the Senegalese presidency stated that Lukens had “declared that the United States never asked President Wade to leave and supports no candidate.”⁵⁵

Senegal is eligible for trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA; Title I, P.L. 106-200), although exports to the United States are minimal. Senegal hosted the fourth annual AGOA Forum in July 2005. A bilateral investment treaty entered into force in 1990. U.S. direct foreign investment in Senegal is estimated at more than \$150 million.⁵⁶ U.S. bilateral imports for consumption totaled \$6.7 million in 2011; bilateral exports totaled \$262.5 million.⁵⁷

U.S. Assistance

U.S. bilateral foreign assistance to Senegal has increased significantly in recent years, from under \$60 million in FY2008 to an estimated \$106.7 million in FY2012 (**Table 1**), in addition to a 2009 MCC compact worth \$540 million. The increase largely reflects growing allocations for food security and health assistance; Senegal is a focus country for the Obama Administration’s Feed the Future initiative and the President’s Malaria Initiative (PMI). Other areas of focus for U.S. bilateral aid include democratic governance; economic growth; rural development; countering violent extremism; and military effectiveness. In the lead up to February 2012 elections, U.S. aid (\$850,000) provided support to domestic election observation groups.⁵⁸ Bilateral aid currently looks set to decrease; the Administration has requested \$89.8 million for FY2013.

The conference report (H.Rept. 112-331) accompanying P.L. 112-74, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2012, recommended that “not less than” \$50 million in Development Assistance be allocated for Senegal. At the same time, conferees stated that they were “concerned that [former Chadian president] Hissène Habré has not been extradited for prosecution for crimes against humanity,” and directed the Secretary of State to submit a report on “steps taken by the Government of Senegal to assist in bringing Habré to justice.” (See “Human Rights,” above.)

In addition to the State Department and USAID, other agencies that fund and implement assistance programs in Senegal include the Defense Department (DOD), the Department of Agriculture, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Senegal also hosts some 200 Peace Corps volunteers, the largest contingent in Africa. Senegal further benefits from multilateral assistance through international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the African Development Bank (AfDB), which receive substantial financial support from the United States. In 2004, Senegal became eligible for \$850 million in multilateral debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ AFP, “Présidentielle: Le Sénégal N’Acceptera ‘Pas de Diktat’ de l’Etranger (Gouvernement),” February 1, 2012.

⁵⁵ AFP, “Senegal’s Wade Meets Critical US Ambassador,” February 14, 2012.

⁵⁶ State Department, “2011 Investment Climate Statement,” op. cit.

⁵⁷ U.S. International Trade Commission data, accessed on February 10, 2012.

⁵⁸ Remarks by Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson, State Department Senegal roundtable, February 17, 2012.

⁵⁹ International Monetary Fund and International Development Association, “Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) (continued...)

U.S. security assistance has focused on military professionalization, counterterrorism, maritime security, and peacekeeping training. Thousands of Senegalese peacekeepers have received training through the State Department's Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program. Senegal is also one of 10 participant countries in the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP), a multi-year, interagency program aimed at defeating terrorist organizations in North and West Africa by promoting democratic governance, discrediting terrorist ideology, and strengthening regional counterterrorism capabilities. Through its complementary Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans Sahara (OEF-TS), DOD conducts multinational and bilateral exercises with the Senegalese armed forces. Senegal has benefited from several DOD "Section 1206" security assistance packages, including two multi-country counterterrorism programs and three regional maritime security programs.⁶⁰ Senegal also benefits from a State Partnership Program with the National Guard of Vermont.⁶¹

Table 1. U.S. Bilateral Assistance for Senegal, Selected Accounts

appropriations, \$ thousands (not adjusted for inflation)

	FY2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012 (est.)	FY2013 (requested)
TOTAL	57,859	93,754	109,480	98,813	106,660	89,772
DA	21,798	55,834	56,528	44,600	50,000	33,900
ESF	0	0	400	0	0	0
Food for Peace	4,070	3,355	0	0	0	0
GHCS (State Dept.)	1,535	1,535	1,768	1,535	1,535	1,397
GHCS (USAID)	29,279	32,043	48,350	51,253	53,950	53,400
FMF	0	0	300	399	325	325
NADR	0	0	1,143	0	0	0
IMET	1,177	987	991	1,026	850	750

Source: State Department Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, FY2010-FY2013.

Notes: This table reflects bilateral assistance administered by the State Department and USAID. It does not include aid disbursed from regional accounts (such as funds allocated for TSCTP) or funded through agencies other than the State Department and USAID, such as the MCC (see below) or DOD.

Accounts: DA=Development Assistance; ESF=Economic Support Fund; GHCS=Global Health and Child Survival; FMF=Foreign Military Financing; NADR=Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs; IMET=International Military Education and Training.

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Initiative – Statistical Update," March 31, 2004.

⁶⁰ Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006 provides the Secretary of Defense with authority to train and equip foreign military and maritime security forces. See CRS Report RS22855, *Security Assistance Reform: "Section 1206" Background and Issues for Congress*, by Nina M. Serafino.

⁶¹ See CRS Report R41957, *The National Guard State Partnership Program: Background, Issues, and Options for Congress*, by Lawrence Kapp and Nina M. Serafino.

Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact

Senegal has been eligible for MCC assistance since the start of determinations in 2004.⁶² In April 2009, the MCC awarded Senegal \$13.39 million to support the development of a compact. In September 2009, the MCC approved a five-year, \$540 million compact aimed at encouraging economic growth through improvements in infrastructure and agricultural production. The compact, which entered into force in September 2010, focuses on road rehabilitation and expanding irrigation in two geographic regions that are considered to hold potential for commercial agriculture, the Senegal River Valley and the Casamance region.

Some Members of Congress have expressed concerns over Senegal's MCC compact, given perceived democratic backsliding and rising corruption.⁶³ MCC officials have defended the compact, noting that Senegal has performed in the top quartile on most MCC indicators, including "control of corruption"; that Senegal's government is highly committed to the compact's policy objectives; and that Senegal is also "a good investment bet" for the MCC's food security and global health initiatives. MCC officials have also stated that there are ample policy tools at their disposal to monitor MCC disbursements and to ensure Senegal's compliance with good governance standards.⁶⁴ In March 2011, MCC CEO Daniel Yohannes testified before Congress that Senegal had reformed certain procurement procedures in response to U.S. pressure.⁶⁵ MCC disbursements have nonetheless been slower than initially anticipated due to procurement-related corruption concerns as well as technical issues. MCC officials also continue to monitor political conditions ahead of elections.⁶⁶

Outlook

As Senegal prepares for elections, tensions persist between its record as a stable democracy and concerns over negative political trends amid ongoing popular protests in Dakar. The upcoming elections are seen by many Senegalese as a potential watershed for the country's political future, in which Senegal may either further its democratic consolidation or potentially experience a flawed election that could damage its international image. Despite economic growth over the past decade, political instability, corruption, insecurity in Casamance, and the potentially distortive effects of transnational drug trafficking could pose barriers to socioeconomic development and security. Events in the turbulent surrounding region may also impact Senegal's trajectory.

⁶² Eligibility is based on policy performance, relative to the median for low-income countries, on criteria related to political freedom, government effectiveness, and economic governance. See CRS Report RL32427, *Millennium Challenge Corporation*, by Curt Tarnoff.

⁶³ See, e.g., David Freddoso, "Specter: Senegal Shakes Down Americans. Twice," *The Washington Examiner*, March 16, 2010; House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, Hearing on the Millennium Challenge Corporation, April 14, 2010, transcript via Congressional Quarterly (CQ); and Chuck Neubauer, "For Senegal: U.S. Aid, 164-Ft. Statue," *The Washington Times*, August 15, 2010.

⁶⁴ "Millennium Challenge Corporation Hosts Post-Board Public Outreach," March 25, 2010, transcript via CQ; MCC response to CRS inquiry, September 22, 2009.

⁶⁵ House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, Hearing on the Proposed Fiscal 2012 Appropriations for the Millennium Challenge Corporation, March 15, 2011.

⁶⁶ MCC response to CRS inquiry, February 10, 2012.

Author Contact Information

Alexis Arieff
Analyst in African Affairs
aarieff@crs.loc.gov, 7-2459